

February 23, 2015

Appropriations Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly

Subject: UConn's Funding

Because of my teaching commitments, I am unable to speak to you during the public budget hearing. However, permit me to urge you in writing to preserve full funding for the University of Connecticut.

First, I want to thank you for your support of UConn in the past, which has been admirable when compared to levels of higher education funding in other states nationally.

While others testify before you on Tuesday evening, I will be teaching students in a UConn School of Nursing course: End of Life, a Multicultural, Interdisciplinary Perspective. Although half the students in the course are nursing students (who professionally need to understand death and dying from a variety of perspectives), half of the students in the course are not health majors but students in a variety of other disciplines. The course is very popular, it fulfills two general education requirements, and its enrollment fills in the first couple of weeks of registration. In the past, we have been able to offer two full sections of the course each semester, but this year because of budget concerns we've only been able to run one section in the spring semester. This one example of this year's modest belt tightening merely foreshadows reductions in the courses available to students under the governor's proposed budgets. The proposed budget cuts will entail reductions in faculty with corresponding reductions in courses, ultimately jeopardizing students' ability to complete degrees on time and the university's ability to grow its enrollments.

Despite national demographic declines in the college age population, particularly in New England, UConn has been competitive in recruiting the best students. Visionary investments in Next Generation Connecticut will enable us to admit even more students. Now that is also in jeopardy.

UConn occupies a unique place in Connecticut's higher education. On the one hand, it is a Land Grant university that serves the state by educating professions and fostering economic development. On the other hand, it has become a significant national (and even international) research university. Both of these missions require stable and predictable funding, without which we will be unable to sustain existing initiatives and to recruit and retain new faculty, many of whom are highly competitive and can take their pick of positions.

I urge you to reconsider the governor's proposed budget in order to find ways of restoring funding to UConn.



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